

Dialectical Tensions and Turning Points of Large-Family Communication

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Rebecca S. Borchelt

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Glen H. Stamp

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glen H. Stamp", written over a horizontal line.

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Thesis Abstract

Much research has been conducted on the communication patterns and processes in families consisting of five or less members. What I have tried to generate is some discussion of communication in a larger family setting. I chose to use my family of thirteen members as my source for information and I have applied four theories, which have been previously created in the studies of much smaller families, to relevant events in my family. The four theories are: Turning points, dialectical tensions, working and non-working relationships, and diluted resources. From this study I have drawn many conclusions about large-family communication through its transitional periods of growth.

Thesis Overview

This thesis examines the theories of turning points and dialectical tensions as they relate to family communication. I used my own family as the basis for this paper.

The paper begins with the research method. Each family member was contacted and asked about what it was like to be part of a large family (children) or what it was like to raise eleven children (parents). In addition, each of the children were asked to discuss a particular incident in the family. All family members responded.

The second section of the paper provides a brief overview of four theories of the family: Turning points, dialectical tensions, working and non-working relationships, and diluted resources. Each of these theories are applied to my own family.

The third section provides an introduction to my family consisting of two parents and eleven children. I have provided some background information (from my perspective) on each child as well as on each parent. In addition, a short excerpt from the letters each wrote in response to the interview questions is included.

In the conclusion I have combined all of the information and research and applied it to my family discovering the working forces behind my family's successes and failures.

The major goal of this thesis was for me to gain more knowledge about family systems and communication. That goal has been obtained, however, a greater, unforeseen goal has been reached as well. I have learned so much more about myself and have uncovered a topic that I have been running from for years. I had many unanswered questions and inaccurate thoughts about my family members and through this project I have answered those questions and gained new insight on my family. Much of this newly gained knowledge will not be printed in this paper due to the fact that it does not relate to the theories researched.

I. Research Method

My method of research involved gathering data from my other family members. I accomplished this by sending out letters to each individual. These letters contained some general questions focusing on each member's perspective of the family as we all grew up together and as we function in the present. My second point of interest was to receive their thoughts and involvement with the major turning point our family faced in order to understand the point at which the dialectical tensions came to a peak and the episode occurred. I received 100% participation from both the children and my parents.

The other resources included articles from journals as well as books dealing with relationships, human communication, and birth order. From both the information obtained in the letters as well as knowledge gained from articles, conclusions are drawn about my family's growth and development.

II. Theories

Dialectical Tension

Dialectical tensions is a term that has been used to describe the relationship between the apparently opposing forces that operate in the family. By opposing forces we mean the polarities, paradoxes, contradictions, and/or competing demands that confront the family as it interacts over time.

(Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Bochner, 1990, pp. 18-19)

Two dialectical tensions central to a family's functioning are integration/differentiation and stability/change. Each family member develops his/her own uniqueness and identity which defines individual differentiation, however, in order for a family to be functional as a unit this individuality must somehow blend with the

remaining elements of the system. Tension may arise when trying to balance independence and the dependence within the family or any relationship.

The tensions between stability and change are also present when operating a family. Every family and relationship has some rules or patterns that evolve within their system over time. This provides security for the family. However, as a family moves through its life cycles, change is a necessity for the system's success. Roles and rules must adapt (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Bochner, 1990).

Turning Points

When individuals look back on the history of their relationships, they may recall several explosive episodes that changed the course of the relationship. These decisive episodes in the relationship are called turning points. Not all turning points lead to dramatic shifts in commitment; some merely cement feelings that existed already. In most cases, however, turning points are experienced either as breakthroughs, after which the relationship soars to higher levels of commitment, or as breakdowns, after which the relationship falls apart. (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Bochner, 1990, p. 111)

Families move through various stages as they change over time. The five stages in a family are: (1) A newly married couple, (2) The family with young children, (3) The family with adolescents, (4) The launching family, and (5) The empty-nest and retirement family (Yerby, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Bochner, 1990). Between each of these stages there are periods of transition which involve change. During these periods, turning points may occur and are used as bridges into the next stage of development.

Turning points may result in a breakthrough or a breakdown for a family; regardless a great deal of communications occurs among significant individuals as a

result of the common turning point. A problem is confronted and ideas are exchanged. Acceptance of these ideas may be the greatest barrier to pass for a successful resolution of the turning point.

Working and Non-Working Relationships

One determinant of success through dialectical tensions and turning points is the strength of the relationship before confronting such pressures. While a relationship can refer to a friendship, a courtship or to family ties, each of these relationships must have the dialectic of conjunctive freedom, or the freedom to be independent and the freedom to be dependent

While each person is free to pursue individual goals and interests separate from the other and without the friend's interference or help, each retains the liberty to call on the other for assistance, should it be necessary. (Rawlins, 1983, p. 260)

This quote defines the dialectic of conjunctive freedoms, an essential ingredient for a successful relationship. This freedom continues to feed and nurture a relationship by bringing in new ideas and topics for discussion as well as new friends and activities. There needs to be trust present to maintain the bond between the two in the relationship. One needs to trust the other that when the other chooses to be independent he/she will return to one and need dependence on him/her. Each person needs to fulfill both freedoms to maintain a healthy relationship.

A relationship may suffer when this set of freedoms are not granted. If one member becomes possessive the other may feel trapped and suffocated to the point of fleeing from the relationship. On the other hand, if a member takes too much independent freedom and becomes careless with the relationship, ignoring the other person, it may jeopardize the bond between the members causing one to find a third party to fill the dependent freedom. As a result the original relationship ends.

These are two very opposing natures and it is difficult to find the medium for success. For some the strain of practicing these freedoms may be too great on the relationship and becomes a catalyst for termination. In conclusion, people want their friends to let them do what they want when they want to, yet be there for them to call upon, if needed. (Rawlins, 1983, p. 264)

Diluted Resources

All in all, my family has grown to be hard working and successful individuals. This seems so amazing to me when I look back at how we were raised. When families become larger than five a situation titled diluted resources may occur (Blake, 1989). The attention and energy of the parents can be spread only so thin. This does not stop at emotional attention, but physical needs are rationed as well (Blake, 1989).

My parents tried their hardest to tend to all eleven of us equally and I see success on their part at attaining their goal. We always had plenty of food due to the bountiful farm we owned. However, food was not to be wasted and every plate was to be clean before being dismissed from the table. My mother was a wonderful cook, maid, nurse, etc. and worked day and night to fulfill our needs. We tried to help her as much as possible because it seemed she was always pregnant or recovering from a pregnancy and we became her vehicles in finishing the daily chores in the house. Dad worked all day for the business he owned and saw to disciplinary maintenance which was his contribution to our needs.

The eleven of us relied more on each other to fulfill our emotional needs because the parents were busy with keeping on top of our basic daily needs. Some of the resources that had been diluted from the parents were recharged by a sibling and then redistributed. This made us more self-reliant and independent than our peers.

III. Description of Family

Members

To understand my conclusions more clearly I will introduce each of my family members. Each is definitely an individual, however, there is a noticeable pattern to the family as a whole. I will also include a short excerpt from each of the letters in which they described their memories of home.

Ed -- Age 40, married, two sons and two daughters.

Ed is the oldest of the eleven children and was the only one of us to experience the feeling of being an only child for about a year. He does not recall this experience, of course. Ed is much like my father in his boisterous ways of expressing his opinions. He does not hesitate to tell you what you are doing wrong, yet at the same time will help you complete the task at hand without complaint. Ed's fondest memories of home are the days when he and his brother Phil would go to the lake with the parents. Because of the number of children at this point there was much more parent/child interaction. Ed remembers this lasting for a short while before the rest of the family rapidly developed. Ed still is working in my Father's business and is the new upcoming president of the company

“ My memories start around kindergarten at Emmanuel. I remember building what seemed like a huge snowman with dad and Phil. I remember Phil and I playing a lot together when we were growing up. I remember looking forward to weekends at the lake with Grandma and Grandpa Strasser in the summertime. I remember mom was always there-- cooking , cleaning and taking care of us kids. I always felt at ease knowing she was around.”

Phil-- Age 39, married. Two sons and two daughters.

Phil is one of the most patient and quiet people I know. The amount of stress he contends with daily is very unhealthy. He works for my dad also and runs the entire office. He does the work of about five people in that office, yet never complains about the burden. Phil's memories of home are much the same as Ed's with the addition of much hard work taking care of the animals they owned at the time.

"The early years of my life were very carefree. We had to do our chores, and had to be reminded to do our chores. Dad was a father who expected obedience, as he should, if we did not do as we were told, he was not reluctant to use the idea of a spanking. Mom got us involved in musical instruments, any other extracurricular activities like sports at school. I never asked to do this because of all the responsibilities Mom and Dad already had."

Ellen-- Age 37, married. Two sons and two daughters.

Ellen is one of the amazingly resourceful. She could make the most beautiful things from nothing. This most likely is the result of having to make-do all her life with what she could find. She was closest to mom and furthest from dad. She was another very opinionated and vocal child. She told dad how it was and that was that. Her physical strength was also amazing, which was a result of much farm work. In fact the farm holds her favorite memories of home. She loved raising steers and milking the cows. She could feel needed and appreciated by the animals. Ellen was never one for doing "girl" things because she had the two older brother as her role models and the type of work that was expected of her. The next two consecutive children in the family were both girls, but she never seemed to fit in as well with them when they all lived at home. Ellen is an excellent home-maker, as is our mother, and she and her husband run one of the closest, loving families I have ever seen.

"Some of my fondest memories are of family celebrations, Birthdays, Weddings, graduations, and even funeral dinners. Coming from a large family along with the many relatives gives you a sense of belonging even if you don't fit in with the peer crowd. Our family is a place where you can find acceptance and support from someone in "the crowd". Sometimes it doesn't come right away but usually one or two would try to understand your view."

Pauline-- Age 36, married. Three sons.

Pauline is another very soft spoken person and she never liked to cause waves in the family. She would be the first to back down if she was ever caught in an argument. She was also very intelligent and the first of our family to go to college, at her own expense. She was extremely successful and finished four years with a degree in Special Education.

As a result of our strict Christian upbringing Pauline continues to run a very Christian household. She has always been one of very high Christian morals and sees herself as everyone's servant, even the stranger's. The lines of communication in her home are open and always busy. She knows the key to holding a family close is healthy communication. Pauline's memories begin at my parent's first house which was located closer to the city. She endured the move to a large farm in the country where some stress was relieved due to more space for the seven children at the time.

"My earliest memories were bits and pieces from Fernhill Avenue -- mostly stuff like chickens, Prince (the dog), kindergarten, and some of Mom and Dad's more violent arguments. On Maplecrest my mind is full of sunny days, roaming the fields, skating on the pond, the treehouse, animals and school days. I don't recall much emotional strife on my part. I know Bill got it alot and Ellen a couple of times."

Yvonne-- Age 35, married. One daughter.

Yvonne was one of the more vocal elements of our family. She never hesitated to voice her opinion, even to Dad. She was also a very intelligent and logical person who was very successful in her college participation as well. She is a veterinary technician and has married a veterinarian. She always loved animals and could make all the sick ones well again. Yvonne was the idol of number 10 in the family (me) because she was always willing to share her knowledge of the world with this child. Physical strength was another quality Yvonne possessed. She set track records all through high school and all 5'2" of her could wrestle a young steer to the ground. Yes, she is amazing and my idol. Here is Yvonne's response to the question as to where she fit in best in the family:

"My first thought, which is probably the correct one, is in the barn. I loved the animals (still do!) and felt loved by them. My best childhood buddies were Bessie (a calf), Hannibal (a cat), and of course Thunder (a horse). Whenever I had tears to shed, they were who I could run to. (Thunder even knew how to give hugs!) When I try to remember interactions with parents or even brothers and sisters, they're few and far between. But, I do remember snuggling in the hay with Hannibal or Queenie, romping in the orchard with the calves, climbing trees with cats, the smell of warm milk and cows, and time spent just enjoying watching Thunder eat his hay."

Bill-- Age 31, married. One daughter.

Bill is number six in the family which places him almost in the middle of the eleven. He communicates very easily and is extremely logical in his thinking process. However, that may have been what caused so much affliction to fall on him from Dad. Bill was not very boisterous, but he would express his feelings in a rational manner. He was never easily riled which seemed to

aggravate Dad even more. There was always friction between Dad and Bill. He was the "chosen one" to be harassed daily by Dad. Bill's emotional strength was very admirable and he could withstand just about anything. Bill's letter takes a different tone than most of the previous children's letters. Something begins to go wrong during this time period with Dad and it only worsens.

" Growing up was a slow process. The days at times seemed to drag on and on. The good thing about the family is that we did alot. Think about it, the weekday would start at 4:30 a.m. to do chores, catch the bus by 7:00, come home, eat toast, do chores, eat dinner, do homework, and go to bed by 8:45 p.m. to do it all the next day. Saturdays for me were spent with dad and the business or performing some of the most traumatic experiences of my life, such as: Butchering pets, chickens, rabbits and steers that your raised for food and 4-H.

The biggest disappointment was the lack of praise during my childhood, nothing was good enough and there always seemed to be a better way than the one that was done by myself. And as you know if it wasn't done right the fear of God was put in your soul by extreme discipline.

To say childhood was fun, I would say childhood was an experience I will never forget."

Lora-- Age 29, married. One son and one daughter.

Lora was definitely a pacifist. She never voiced her feelings, emotions, or opinions (if she even possessed any). She is a follower, yet far from lazy. She has a very strong Christian faith and never puts even her family before God. Being the next in line after Bill was a blessing in a way because she was overlooked by dad and never punished. She was Dad's favorite child and could never do wrong in his eyes. She could always find the positive qualities in a person and she did that often with Dad. Lora is a very responsible person and does not like to rely on anyone to do her work for her, that would be her last

request. According to her letter problems were the last thing she wanted to create.

“I remember dreading missing the school bus because I hated causing problems at home for someone to pick me up. I was terribly insecure throughout my years of school, it wasn't to the point of it showing outwardly, but inside I was fearful.”

Jennifer-- Age 28, married. No children.

Jennifer is another one of the more boisterous children of the family. She never hesitated to express her anger or pain with living at home. She was a very strong person, physically and emotionally. She too could wrestle the animals and win. For some unknown reason, Jennifer was not one of Dad's favorite children. Friction rose between her and Dad about as often as it did with Bill. She was feisty and independent and never needed help from anyone. Jennifer did not have a good childhood and as soon as the age of 18 finally came for her she declared her independence and broke away from the family. Here are pieces of the event that created her mind-set:

“I am going to start at the beginning at the event that opened my eyes to the reality of where and with whom I was living.”

The incident Jennifer went on to describe was one of Mom and Dad's more violent arguments and it took place the summer before her sixth grade year of school. This was how she reacted to this particular event:

“After I thawed from being frozen with fear I ran out into the orchard and began crying and screaming at God that we went to church every Sunday, for what? What had we learned, what improved in our lives because of it? What part of any message did my parents practice?

I ran to my room. This was the day of decay for me. My love for God decayed, my view of the family was destroyed, the anger and feeling of being lost,

yet trapped would burn intensely until the day of my departure."

Ben-- Age 24, single.

Here is a man that would give the shirt off his back to a stranger. Ben sacrifices so much for others and seems content in his constant giving habits. He is still living at home and plans on remaining close to the property. He is a key employee for the future of my Dad's business and dedicates his life to making the business a success. Ben is also passive in his manner of expression. He does not argue or cause waves and he will never let anyone notice he is hurt or upset inside. He truly is a very Christian person and he practices what he believes. His most vivid memories are as follows:

" Growing up in this large family I remember Dad as Mr. Mean. Seemed like he was always yelling at one of us, I remember Bill especially. I know I would hide as much as possible when Dad was close around. He definitely put the fear of God in me. Mom was the Life Saver for me, she would always stand up for me trying to help, but not always succeeding.

Becky--Age 22, Engaged.

It is difficult to describe one's self. I see myself as a fairly strong individual both emotionally and physically. I tried never to cross Dad's path and at times I felt I even understood him. I am the third one of this family to go to college and obtain a degree. I loved to hang around the older kids of the family hoping, someday, I would be accepted into their little groups. I observed and learned through that process. I never really wanted to cause waves, and somehow I managed to talk my way to getting to do the things I really wanted. I would lie or do whatever I could to avoid the disciplinary actions I had witnessed so often. My favorite memories are of the long summer days, before

Ben started work with Dad at age twelve, when Ben and I would build forts, rafts, think of great money making ideas, redecorate or paint the treehouse again and fishing with only the sounds of nature in the summertime for our listening pleasure. Those were the relaxing and peaceful times I wished would never end, but just as we would wish such a wish a voice would be heard, the voice of our father and we knew the peace was gone.

Sarah-- Age 19, engaged.

Sarah is the youngest of the eleven. What a place to be. The parents are retired and all of the older brothers and sisters have their own families now. Sarah is a little person with the voice of thunder if need be. She is not very strong physically, but she could hold her own. She, too, is at college and planning to be married soon. She may have had some difficulty determining where she fit in best because she was raised by her older brothers and sisters and too young to be a member of the Ben and Becky club. She learned to entertain herself with quiet activities such as card games, artwork, and playing with the cats. The responsibilities she had in the family were very few, so she had ample time for play. Her feelings and memories are expressed in this excerpt:

"While growing up I felt like an observer, a spectator. Often I watched my older brothers and sisters do things like milking the cows, or Ben and Becky taking care of the sheep and chickens. During dinner I was a listener while the older ones told each and Mom and Dad about their days. I was very much a follower and still am. I enjoy being a follower because it gives me a sense of security and a feeling of being cared for."

Wallace C. Borchelt-- Age 62, married. Four sons and seven daughters.

This is our father. He amazing and successfully raised eleven children,

with the help of his wife. He is extremely vocal in opinion and comments on personal character. He was raised in a large family with a very firm hand and in turn has raised his children in the same manner. Religion is the biggest part of his life and he preaches daily to all he encounters. If only he could look into himself and apply his preachings to his own life. Here is his view on raising children:

"All of life is to be lived to the glory of God, and He gives us our strength each day. So raising children is a day to day effort so each day is served out in doing what is needed to feed, cloth, educate and love each child as you have resources. A Christian believes the Lord will provide all that is needed for this body and life and having food and clothing be there with content.

To rear children it takes a lot of pure love and care of a mother and all eleven children certainly had this love and care needed for a healthy body and mind. The children have all put in thirteen years of schooling in the Lutheran School system and this made it a real ease of showing and teaching the truths of the Holy Scripture and the life we have by the grace and mercy of God."

Ruth E. Borchelt-- Age 62, married. Four sons and seven daughters.

This is our mother, the most amazing person in the world. She is very emotionally strong and has a pain tolerance greater than any man I know. The day never ended for this woman, she used her nights to catchup on the needs of her children. Through her entire experience with the children she never let her sense of independence waiver. To this day she does not need help from anyone, the only thing she ever asks for is love and she will always receive that from her children forever. Her memories of raising the children appears in a list form because that is how her life was; make a list and check off the days accomplishments.

"Lots of joy-- Lots of Laundry,

Many meals prepared-- schedules for drying dishes,
Fun at Clear Lake at least once a summer,
Confirmations, Baptisms, graduations, weddings,
grandchildren,
Cows getting out --mending fences
Pasteurizing milk-- making butter
Helping with homework, attending concerts
Music lessons, 4-H activities
Track and Cross Country meets
Sunday School and church each week
Christmas programs,
Night feedings, with babies
House cleaning--losing battle
Weeding the garden--canning, and freezing bushels
of food,
Keeping books for the corporation at night
Telephone secretary for corp.
Sewing dresses
Packing lunches
Bringing home a new baby and loving each one,
Pride in each child as they grew into young men and
women. Gratitude to God for His loving care of all of
us and for giving me the strength and wisdom to
hopefully have been a good mother."

The Turning Point

Invariability was the dragon and change was the swift swordsman. There was never such communication in the family as when the battle began. The heroes and heroines in this little war were Jennifer, Bill, Mom, and Dad. They finally came together and changed the family.

The conflict began long before this confrontation; there had been tension between these parties for years. Dad and Jennifer had never gotten along and Dad was determined to have his way. Jennifer, however, was determined to have her way also. She had just graduated from high school and was looking for a career in her long-dreamed-of clothing store. Dad had other ideas. He enrolled Jennifer in class at the local college for business and bookkeeping.

He wanted her to be his company secretary. Jennifer began her classes, but she kept her goals in mind at all times. The entire time she attended school she was planning her escape. She wanted to move West and nothing was going to stop her. Well, no one could because no one else, but Bill, knew of her plans.

There was no genuine communication taking place between Dad and Jennifer. She made it seem as if all was well and she just smiled knowing her life would begin soon. Even at the gatherings she was laughing with the rest of us. We were all blind, except for Bill.

Then the day came, the day our family would enter a new stage of development. We found a note in the mailbox one cold, Fall day that was left there by Jennifer. She had taken a plane to Wyoming and was not returning. This was quite a shock to the system and it was just what the system needed. Communication finally began and it was loud and violent.

Dad and Mom went into a rage and each accused the other of causing Jennifer to leave. Then they turned their anger toward us and accused all of us as if we had performed some act of treason. Mom was very hurt and would gladly have helped Jennifer pack and have given a proper farewell. Dad, on the other hand, was ready to kill. This event was a shock to all of us, except Bill. Yes, except Bill. Poor Bill. He had to come forward and confess his knowledge.

Jennifer, Bill and Dad became a triangulation of sorts. Bill was the mediator for Dad and Jennifer. Bill was always the man with the words and he had such high respect for everyone, even Dad. Yet, his life seemed the roughest. He was left behind to explain Jennifer's reasons for her departure and the violence was vented on him from Dad. The storm blew over and I remember Dad saying at breakfast the next morning, "The bruises will heal, but words are forever."

Those few days of complete torture for our family did pass and one of the

older sisters took it into her hands to carry us over the bridge into the next stage. Yvonne sent everyone a letter along with an invitation of mandatory presence at a family meeting, no spouses. At this meeting the previous event would be discussed in full as well as family improvements. Everyone was to bring with them all the family-related troubles they had been burying for years. The past was to be laid out on the table and for once the family was going to communicate on a very serious level.

The meeting day came around and everyone, except Jennifer, was present. The rules were simple: Say what is on your mind and absolutely no finger pointing. Simple to say but hard to follow. The first words were spoken by the youngest, Sarah, and the floor was passed around the large round table in order of age. We actually discussed our true feelings and the meeting was a breakthrough.

Our family was not perfect overnight, there was still many scars left to heal and those needed time. It was quite a while before we heard a word from Jennifer, except Bill. Jennifer and Dad have talked since and she still lives out West. Their relationship is working as long as the miles between them remain.

There had been a change in the family and that was a rough concept for most of us to grasp. Then we realized that this change was for the better and that each of us could make changes as well. We learned the transition stage was difficult, but change could be very beneficial. The meeting had a greater impact on some of the children than on others. The older ones, especially the boys remained in the corporation with my dad and the oldest girl remained close to mom. We came to the realization that we had choices to make and we could make them independently.

Some examples of change are as follows: Yvonne broke her engagement with Jeff and later married a more suitable mate with which she

— moved to Canada. Dad forbade the breaking of engagements. Bill moved to Florida, which has always been the state of his dreams. Pauline and her family changed religions as did Ellen, Yvonne, Bill, and Lora. Lora and Pauline also moved to other geographic locations.

With all of these changes and relocations it may sound as if my family has grown apart. That is not true, and if anything, we have all grown closer. We are now able to communicate on a new level and distance cannot stop that process. Invariability met change and change freed variability.

— I find it so interesting to look back on this evolution. I remember the family that existed when we were all living at home and now I am living in a family of much diversity. I know every family goes through a growing process and eventually each child of that family will go his or her way. However, I feel my family was unique in the length of time it held on to its original state. The farm and business were contributing factors, but we still each had minds of our own. What kept us locked up for so long? Why didn't someone before the seventh child stand up and declare independence? The answer, I assume, was the fear of change.

IV. The Discussion

— After applying the theories I have defined to my own family many aspects have been explained to me. The theory of dialectical tensions within my family explains the basis for so many bad memories of our lives at home. However, the tension did not stem from the siblings. The tensions arose between the parents or between parent and child, but usually not between the children. After reading the letters from my brothers and sisters it seems as though we all had the same feelings towards dad; we all feared him. This tension was not just a

bridge between family cycles it was a constant day to day battle. As Bill stated in his letter, "The biggest disappointment was the lack of praise during childhood, nothing was ever good enough for dad." We never knew what dad really expected from us. All we know is that we tried our very hardest to do well and avoid disciplinary action, which seemed impossible.

The two types of dialectical tensions I mentioned earlier are between integration and differentiation and between stability and change. It was very difficult within my family setting to develop any type of individual differentiation. Our days and lives were a basic routine. Our regular days began at 4:30 a.m. with the farm chores, catch the bus by 7:00, perform well at school, or work in the summertime, come home, do the chores, eat dinner, do homework, get to bed early and do it all the next day. This schedule was necessary in order to avoid chaos. With so many children growing up in one house there had to be set rules and routines. There was really no other efficient way for dad to raise the eleven children so he found that if more control was applied less chaos would result.

Our biggest individuality was seen at school with our friends. That was a time when each of us could be who we wanted, as long as good reports reached home. We thrived on acceptance at school which also hindered our individuality and self-expression. We were children who lived off of the outer elements rather than inner soul, meaning we judged our performance and ourselves from the approval or disapproval given to us by others. The way we acted was a result of how we thought others would want us to act and not how we felt we wanted to act at any particular time.

Looking at the other end of the spectrum we, as a family, were very integrated. The children all worked together well and never crossed one another. We felt that was our stronghold against the tougher days. Reliance on

this integration was great and it brought on the best memories.

As the family grew older and wiser certain individuals were strong enough to declare their independence. Jennifer is the prime example. She declared nonverbally, by leaving, but the message was clear. She could no longer integrate with the system. As a result of her action, many other siblings began to expose their individuality and the intensity of dialectical tensions rose. We all finally realized that each of us was different and our true selves were only subdued. We were not the people we were told we had to be and each of us became individuals.

One reason for such an explosion of realization stems from the lack of transition between the family stages of development. With eleven children over a twenty year period the family was in all five stages at once. There was not a time period for just a newly married couple due to the war and mom's first pregnancy. From there young children were around the house for 21 years as well as adolescence and some adults and now my parents are retired and they are still raising a few children. With the constant presence of grandchildren there is no time for the empty nest stage to root. We were raised as a mass with little identity, except our last name.

The tensions between stability and change created by a family of four or less usually occur between the five stages in the familial cycle. As a family must bridge these transitions tensions build and are resolved. In my family the bridges were not necessary as a whole, however, they were essential for each individual in the family. The problems of each individual were not presented to the family as a whole and it was usually solved silently and independently. The small transitions and changes made within each child were ignored leading to an act of desperation.

There was great stability within the system and we could always rely on a

never changing pattern of daily life. This was a blessing in that the consistency allowed for efficient use of time and talent. Other areas of stability included: Every Birthday was celebrated in the same manner, church and Sunday school were mandatory every Sunday, supper was to be served at 6:00 sharp, everyone was to attend supper, and there were devotions at each evening meal. Upon these rituals we could definitely find stability.

My parents non-working relationship might be due to their getting married at an early age and never having had time for themselves as a couple. When they began dating, my Dad was drafted for the Korean war. Dad had to leave for war and he gave mom the option of now or maybe never for marriage. She chose to marry. Dad returned from war a stranger and now a father. His family began before a good dyatic relationship existed between he and his wife. The process continued and the relationship only worsened. Dad did not practice negotiation or the idea of give and take to help a situation, he continued a dictatorship and mom was trapped somewhere in the middle.

The tensions that existed in their relationship were carried through each of us; we all felt the stress. One family member finally found freedom from the stress. Jennifer was our hero in disguise. She was strong enough to fulfill her dream, which was really a dream most of the children shared according to the letters I received. She was not about to be smothered any longer and the stress of all the home tensions were taking a physical toll on her body. She had no choice.

With Jennifer's departure our remaining family elements needed to cross into the next level of the units relationship as a whole. We were to face either a breakthrough or a breakdown and a confrontation was inevitable.

The result of this meeting was good for the children. We felt unified and strong, however, dad had one thing to say at the close of the meeting, "One

— father can raise 10 kids, but 10 kids can not raise one father.” Why he said 10 instead of 11 is a mystery. His basic message was that he need not change his ways. The eleven of us benefited in that we gained a new perspective on change. We now knew what the process involved and that we would not be terribly harmed if we decided to follow our dreams as well. Some of the children did not see the changing taking place as a result of the meeting the ways others did for their lives were already filled with their own children and worries of running a successful household. They could easily relate to the chaos children can create.

— The family had a breakdown as a whole with dad, yet a breakthrough for many individual spirits. This turning point was dramatic enough to make up for the silenced possible turning points through most of our childhoods. This episode did not only benefit Jennifer, but many of us had new revelations. Whether drastic or small, we all changed from that night.

— I have found a couple of interesting patterns in describing my siblings. The first is created when looking at the strong and weak characteristics of each child. The pattern seems to begin with Ed and following through to every other child in the line up. Each one possess the boisterous quality and they are physically stronger as well. The remaining children are more reserved and physically weaker than the other group. It is as if the stronger group is casting a shadow over the brother or sister following them in the order.

— The second pattern arose when looking at the memories of home. The older siblings remember more good times at home than the younger ones. In reading the descriptions of home from each child the picture becomes tinted darker in descending order. The violence and verbal abuse seemed to grow with each child and peaked at about the middle of the clan with Yvonne, Bill and Jennifer. This could be a result of many contributing factors. One being diluted

resources which strained the parents greatly and another being just the fact that they were raising so many children at once and daily trying to keep order and control, but that did not stop the production. Whatever the reasons there was an escalation of stress and tensions.

I do not fully blame my father for the way he felt he had to deal with some of the children. His stress must have been great in raising the eleven of us and he needed the control and order he asked for in doing so. He did send us all to the best schools and taught us how to work hard. And is any person's accomplishments ever fully appreciated in the world? That reality was just introduced to us earlier than it is to most children. This paper points out a turning point and how a large family dealt with it as well as the role my father played in the situation as only one contributing factor. My parents are to be commended for their accomplishments and the eleven marks they have left on this earth.

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